

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER
Handbook Revision, Excess Credit Fee Exclusions

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

At its November 2012 meeting, the Board approved an Excess Credit Fee Policy (*Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 4*) to be charged to a student who has attempted credits equal to 150 percent of the credits required for the student's program of study. Under the policy, certain exclusions apply and institutions must establish an appeals process to consider excluding certain credits that may be inappropriate for the 150 percent credit calculation. To allow institutions time to implement procedures related to the new fee and identify and adequately notify students who may be subject to the new fee, the policy is not effective until Fall 2014. This policy was recommended by the ad hoc Committee on Access and Affordability and is one of a number of policies approved by the Board in recent years to support student success by encouraging on-time degree completion.

Within the past year, as procedures to implement the new fee have been adopted, institutions have asked for clarification with regard to the application of the policy. In particular, subsection 2 of the policy excludes credits from previously earned degrees or certificates from the 150 percent credit calculation. As discussed with the Board, the intent of this policy is to encourage degree-seeking undergraduate students to obtain their first degree, and not to penalize students returning to higher education to seek additional degrees or credentials. However, this subsection was not intended and should not be interpreted to exclude credits earned under an associate's degree that a student is counting toward his or her first bachelor's degree. In addition, the inclusion of "dissertation credits" in the list of credits that may be excluded by institutions during the appeals process has caused some confusion as to whether the policy could be interpreted to apply to graduate students. Therefore, a clarification in the language is proposed.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend *Title 4, Chapter 17, Section 4* (Excess Credit Fee) of the *Handbook* to specify that for a student seeking a first bachelor's degree who has previously earned a certificate or associate's degree, attempted credits from those previously earned awards will be included in the Excess Credit Fee threshold calculation. In addition, delete "dissertation credits" in the list of possible exclusions under the institutional appeals process as the policy only applies to undergraduate students. (See attached policy proposal)

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

This proposal is brought forward at the request of institutions to clarify the language and intent of the excess credit fee policy before its effective date of Fall 2014. Clarifying the language at this time will facilitate the implementation of the policy for the institutions and ensure students understand its application as they work to complete their degrees on-time.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- The proposal is consistent with and clarifies the original intent of the policy.
- Because of the financial implications for students who are approaching or have exceeded the Excess Credit Fee threshold, it is important to ensure that the policy and its application are as clear as possible.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

None have been presented at this time.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

Retain the existing language and rely on procedures and guidelines to clarify the intent of the policy.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title # _____ Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title # 4 Chapter # 17 Section # 4
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter # _____ Section # _____
- Other: _____
- Fiscal Impact: Yes _____ No X
- Explain: _____

POLICY PROPOSAL
TITLE 4, CHAPTER 17, SECTION 4
Excess Credit Fee

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 4. Excess Credit Fee (Effective Fall 2014)

1. A 50 percent Excess Credit Fee on the per-credit registration fee shall be charged to a student who has accrued attempted credits equal to 150 percent of the credits required for the student's program of study. The Excess Credit Fee shall be imposed on registration fees charged in the current semester and in subsequent semesters, including summer terms, where a student's cumulative credit hour total exceeds 150 percent of the credits required for the student's program of study.
2. ***Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, credits*** [~~Credits~~] from [~~a~~] previously earned degrees or certificates shall be excluded from the 150 percent credit calculation. ***For a student seeking a first bachelor's degree who has previously earned a certificate or associate's degree, attempted credits from those previously earned awards will be included in the Excess Credit Fee threshold calculation.***
3. Institutions shall establish an appeals process and may exclude from the 150 percent calculation the following:
 - a. Credits earned through examinations for determining credit for prior learning as authorized in Title 4, Chapter 14;
 - b. Credits attempted while enrolled as a high school student if those credits do not meet the degree requirements for the student's program of study;
 - c. Credits attempted at an institution outside NSHE if those credits do not meet the degree requirements for the student's program of study;
 - d. Credits attempted for remedial courses; ***and***
 - e. [~~Dissertation credits; and~~
 - f.] Other credits determined by the institution as inappropriate for the 150 percent credit calculation.
4. Community service and non-credit bearing continuing education courses are not subject to the provisions of this section. Credits for post-baccalaureate and post-masters certification courses are also not subject to the provisions of this section.
5. The revenue generated from the Excess Credit Fee shall supplement student advising and counseling services, including salary and wages, operating, and equipment expenses.
6. Institutions shall publicize the Excess Credit Fee policy set forth in this section in such a manner to ensure that students have adequate notification of the fee. Institutions shall establish a procedure for notifying students who are approaching the 150 percent credit threshold.